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Drawn by Charles Dana Gibson.

EUGENIE.

The Quarterly Illustrator

Vol. III.

January, February, and March, 1895

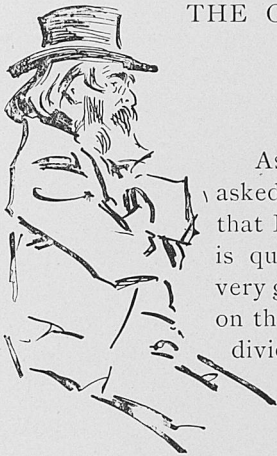
No. 9

"We make no choice among the varied paths where art and letters seek for truth."

THE ORIGIN OF A TYPE OF THE AMERICAN GIRL

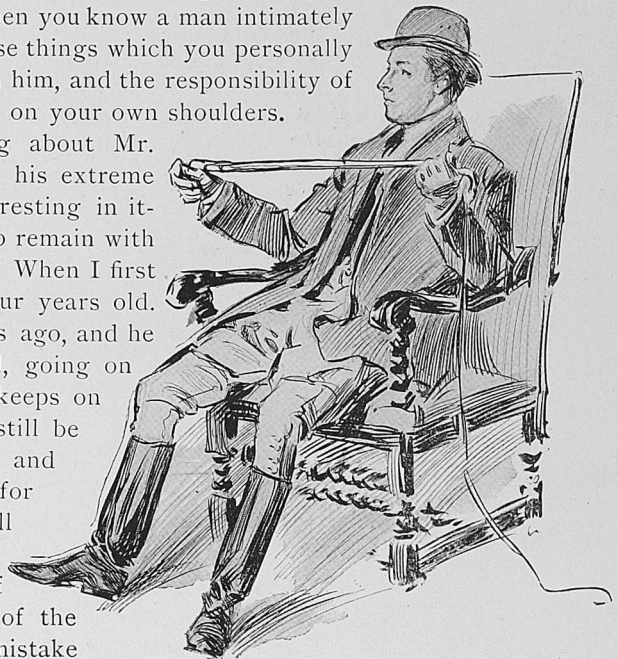
BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS.

With original illustrations by Charles Dana Gibson.



As I know nothing of art, I must suppose that when I was asked to tell something of Charles Dana Gibson, it was as a man that I was expected to write of him, and not as an artist. As he is quite as much of a man as he is an artist, which is saying a very great deal, I cannot complain of lack of subject-matter. But on the other hand, it is always much easier to write about an individual one knows only by reputation than of a man one knows as a friend, because in the former place one goes to the celebrity for the facts, and he supplies them himself, and so has to take the responsibility of all that is said of him. But when you know a man intimately and as a friend, you tell of those things which you personally have found most interesting in him, and the responsibility of the point of view rests entirely on your own shoulders.

The most important thing about Mr. Gibson, outside of his art, is his extreme youth. This is not only interesting in itself, but because it promises to remain with him for such a very long time. When I first met Gibson he was twenty-four years old. That was in London, five years ago, and he is now "twenty-five years old, going on twenty-four," so that if he keeps on growing at that rate, he will still be the youngest successful black and white artist in this country for twenty years to come, as he will even then, in 1914, have only reached his thirtieth year. Of course this may be an error of the newspaper paragraphers, or a mistake on the part of Gibson himself, who



A FOLLOWER OF THE HOUNDS.



CONFIDENCES.

having been called the Boy Artist for so long dislikes to give up his crimson sash and knickerbockers. But in any event, it is most demoralizing to his friends, as it has kept several of them to my certain knowledge at the age of twenty-eight for the last five years, none of them caring to grow older until Gibson was ready to make the first move.

It is always interesting to tell of the early struggles of great men, but Gibson's difficulties were not very severe, and were soon overcome. When he recounts them now, to show that he as well as others has had to toil for recognition, he leaves the impression with you that what

troubled his spirit most in those days was not that his drawings were rejected, but that he had to climb so many flights of stairs to get them back. His work then was in the line of illustrated advertisements which no one wanted, and it was not until he knocked at the door of the office of *Life* that he met with a welcome and with encouragement. In return for this early recognition, Mr. Gibson has lately erected and presented to that periodical a very fine eleven-story



A TÊTE À TÊTE.

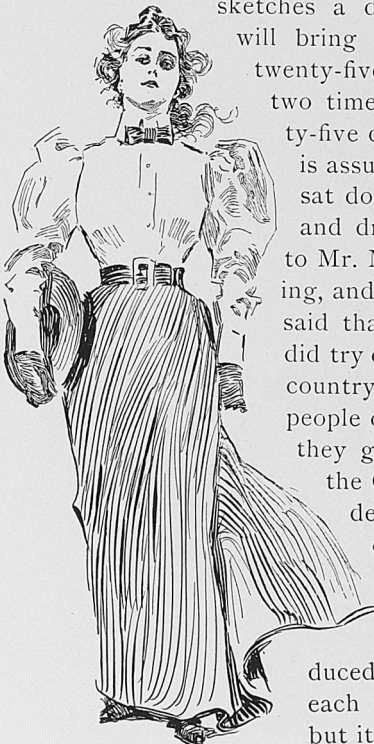
building, on the top floor of which he occupies a large and magnificent studio. He ascends to this in a gilded elevator, scorning the stairs on which he climbed to success. His first contribution to *Life* was a sketch of a dog barking at the moon, which was drawn during the run of the "Mikado" in New York, and the picture was labelled after a very popular song in that opera, called "The Moon and I." Mr. Mitchell looked at the picture of the absurd little fox-terrier barking at the round genial moon, and wrote out a check for four dollars for Mr. Gibson, while that young man sat anxiously outside in the hall with his hat between his knees. He then gave the check to Mr. Gibson, who resisted the temptation to look and see for how large an amount it might be, and asked him to let them have "something else." Mr. Gibson went down the stairs several steps at a time, without complaining of their number, and as he journeyed back to his home in Flushing he argued it out in this way: "If I can get four dollars for a silly little picture of a dog," he said, "how much more will I not receive for really humorous sketches of men and women. I can make six drawings as good as that in an evening, six times four is twenty-five dollars, and six

sketches a day, not counting Sunday, will bring me in one hundred and twenty-five dollars a week. Fifty-two times one hundred and twenty-five dollars is about seven thousand a year. My income is assured!" And in pursuance of this idea he actually sat down that night, under the lamp on the centre table, and drew six sketches, and the next morning took them to Mr. Mitchell, of *Life*, with a proud and confident bearing, and Mr. Mitchell sent them all out to him again, and said that perhaps he had better try once more. That he did try once more, is very well known to everybody in this country, and, since he exhibited in Paris last spring, to people on the other side of the water as well. Over there they gave him a whole wall to himself in the Salon of the Champ de Mars, and the French art critics were delighted and extravagant in their written "appreciations." But long before that exhibition of his work, the queer running signature of C. D. Gibson, with the little round circle over the i, had become significant and familiar. He had introduced us in those last few years to many types, and each possessed its own peculiar and particular virtue, but it was his type of the American girl which made an

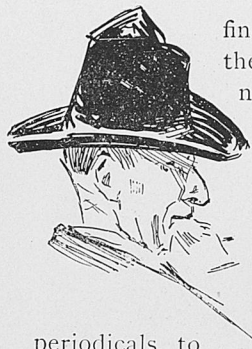
entire continent of American girls profoundly grateful. Gibson has always shown her as a



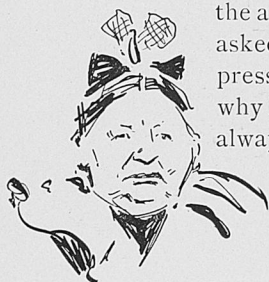
ARGUMENT.



AN AMERICAN GIRL.



periodicals, to show his countrywomen of what they were capable, and of what was expected of them in consequence. But with all of this evident admiration for the American woman Gibson is somewhat inconsistent. For he is constantly placing her in positions that make us fear she is a cynical and worldly-wise young person, and of a fickleness of heart that belies her looks. And



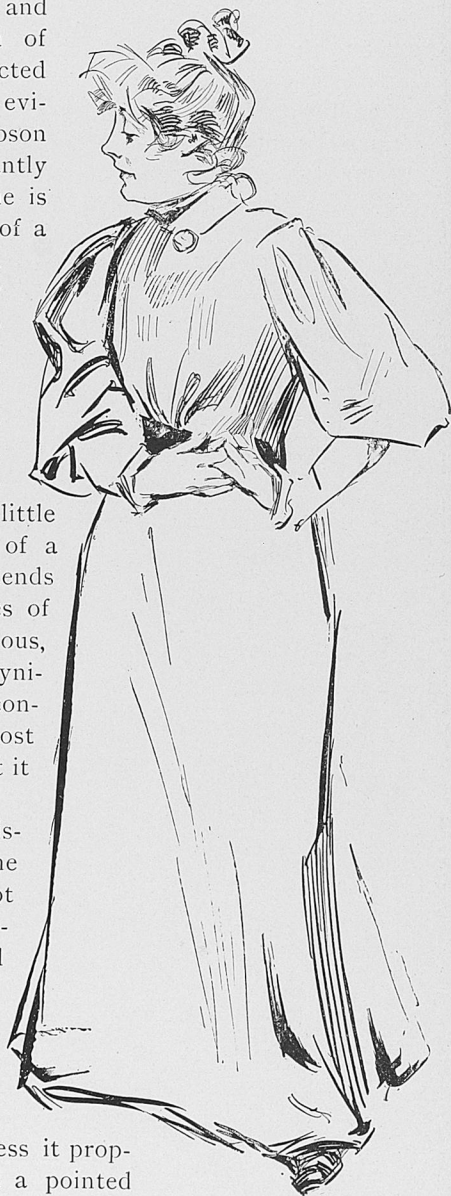
the artist's friends are constantly asked why he takes such a depressing view of matrimony, and why he thinks American girls are always ready to sell themselves for titles, and if he is not a disappointed lover himself, and in consequence a little morbid and a good deal of a cynic. To Mr. Gibson's friends

these questions are as amusing as his pictures of ruined lives and unhappy marriages are curious, for it is only in his pictures that he shows cynicism, and neither in his conversation nor his conduct does he ever exhibit anything but a most healthy and boyish regard for life and all that it gives.

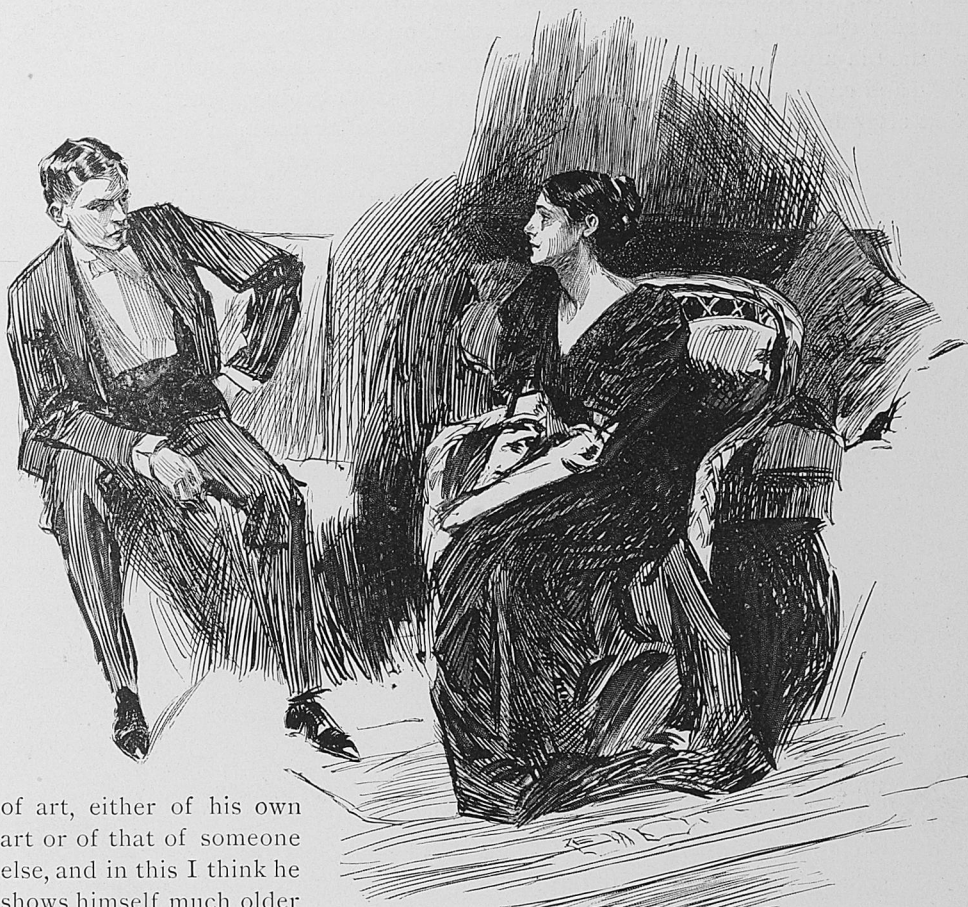
It is quite safe to say that Gibson is not a disappointed lover, or if he is, he has concealed the fact very well, and it cannot be said that his conduct toward the rest of womankind shows the least touch of resentment. As an artist, however, he is frequently disappointing to strangers, because he does not live up to the part, or even trouble to dress it properly. He does not affect a pointed beard or wear a velvet jacket, or talk



fine and tall young person, with a beautiful face and figure, and with the fearlessness on her brow and in her eyes that comes from innocence and from confidence in the innocence of others toward her. And countless young women, from New York and Boston to Grand Rapids and Sioux City, have emulated her erect carriage and have held their head as she does, and have discarded bangs in order to look like her, and fashioned their gowns after hers. It is as though Gibson had set up a standard of feminine beauty and sent it broadcast through the land by means of the magazines and



LE NEZ PARISIEN.



PROBLEMS.

of art, either of his own art or of that of someone else, and in this I think he shows himself much older than his years. People who talk to him of subjects which they suppose are in his line of work, are met by a polite look of in-

quiry, and their observations are received with a look of the most earnest attention.

But he lets the subject drop when they cease talking. Like all great men, Gibson apparently thinks much more of the things he does indifferently well than of the one thing for which he is best known. He is, for instance, very much better pleased when he is asked to sing "Tommy Atkins," than when editors of magazines humbly supplicate for the entire output of his studio; and if anyone *should* be so brave as to ask him to sing a sentimental song, his joy would know no bounds. His reputation as a sailor is another thing that he guards most jealously, and all of this last summer art editors telegraphed him for promised work until the wires burned, while the artist was racing in a small canoe around the rock-bound coast of Buzzards Bay. It is certainly a very healthy sign when a young man of "twenty-five, going on twenty-



four," can return after a nine months' residence in Paris, and contentedly spend his first month at home seated on the tilting edge of a canoe in a wet bathing suit, for ten hours a day. It is also a good sign, and one that goes to show that Gibson is far from being spoiled; that after having Sybil Sanderson sing and Loie Fuller dance in his Paris studio, before a polite circle of ambassadors and numerous pretenders to the throne of France,



IN THE PARK.

he can find equal entertainment in the lazy quiet of a Massachusetts fishing village, and in drawing posters to advertise the local church fair. Now that he has given up his flannels and sweater, and returned to his work in New York, Mr. Gibson has developed a desire to pose as a Bohemian, which his friends who live in hall-bedrooms resent, as they consider a Bohemian with a grand piano, and tapestries four hundred years old, something of a curiosity and a fraud.

At present Gibson is full of a plan to bring out a selected number of drawings in book form, that they may not be lost in the covers of the magazines, and his interest in this book is as great as



though he did not know that his pictures are already preserved in the memories of many thousands, and actually in scrap-books and on the walls of offices and cabins and drawing-rooms. I have seen them myself pinned up in as far distant and various places as the dressing-room of a theatre in Fort Worth, Tex., and in a students' club at Oxford. But it will be a great book, and it will be dedicated to "A Little American Girl," and only Mr. Gibson's friends will know that the picture of this sweet and innocent little maiden which will appear on the fly-leaf of the book is of his little sister.

I fear this article does not give a very clear idea of its hero, and it would be certainly incomplete if I did not add that among Gibson's other wicked habits, is the serious one of never keeping engagements, and his friends are now trying to cure him by never asking him anywhere. When he is older he may overcome even this, and in the meanwhile, I will ask those who have read this not to judge Mr. Gibson by what I have said so ineffectually of him, but by his work, and they will understand that the artist that is capable of producing it, must be a pretty good sort of a man himself.



A WORLD'S FAIR GROUP.